GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2928
ANSWERED ON:19.03.2008
ARRANGEMENTS MADE FOR HAJ PILGRIMS
Owaisi Shri Asaduddin

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has received any protest from Chief Ministers of various states regarding arrangements made by the Government for Haj Pilgrims;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken/ being taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS(SHRI E. AHAMED)

(a) & (b) The Government have received a letter from the Chief Minister of Bihar regarding difficulties faced by some pilgrims during Haj 2007. This Ministry has not received any other communication from any other Chief Minister in this regard.

(c) As per the past practice, the Government of India made adequate arrangements for Haj pilgrims during Haj 2007. The arrangements made for accommodation of Haj pilgrims in Makkah and Mina in 2007 were quite satisfactory. However, a few complaints were received regarding inadequate facilities at place of stay, loss of way to the place of their stay, problems related to local transportation, etc. Some pilgrims faced hardship due to delay in arrival/departure of flights and change in flight schedules. Some pilgrims on return did not receive their baggage and/or Zam Zam (holy water).

There is a system in place for the redressal of the hardships faced by the pilgrims such as transportation related issues, inadequate services at the place of their stay, loss of baggage, etc. The Government of India sets up a large number of administrative offices in the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah besides at Jeddah airport. These offices are manned by more than 210 administrative staff members deputed by the Government from India besides the seasonal staff recruited locally in Saudi Arabia. In addition, the Government makes arrangements for providing proper medical facilities for the pilgrims. The staff on duty co-ordinates with other agencies involved for taking appropriate measures. During Haj 2007, the complaints and suggestions from the pilgrims pertaining to such problems were well received by the Government of India staff on duty and action was taken for their redressal. The issue related to delay and rescheduling of flights, delay/non-receipt of baggage etc. h! ave been taken up with the airlines in order to minimise such problems during the next Haj season. The delay and non-receipt of Zam Zam was due to general shortage of Zam Zam locally. The Consulate General of India, Jeddah has obtained approval from the Saudi authorities to permit Air India to carry the backlog of cans of Zam Zam to India for distribution to the pilgrims who have not received it till now and Air India after obtaining approval for its flight schedule is to transport it back to India.